10-5-98 USA Today

KING LAWSUIT: Martin Luther King Jr.'s family is suing a man who once claimed he hired King's assassin. Lloyd Jowers claimed on national TV in 1993 that the man he hired was not James Earl Ray. Jowers has not discussed the case since. The suit, filed Friday in Tennessee, seeks damages from Jowers and "unknown co-conspirators." The family says it hopes the lawsuit will shed light on King's death. Ray confessed and pleaded guilty after King's killing in Memphis in 1968 but recanted. He was serving 99 years in prison when he died of liver disease in April. Lewis Garrison, lawyer for Jowers, said the defense will be that Jowers was involved but did not know King was the target.

King Family Files Suit On Conspiracy Issue

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MEMPHIS, Oct. 3 (AP) — The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s family has filed a lawsuit in another effort to get a Tennessee court to hear its claim that his assassination was a conspiracy.

The suit, filed on Friday, accuses a former Memphis restaurant owner, Lloyd Jowers, and "unknown co-conspirators" of being involved in Dr. King's murder. The suit seeks unspecified damages and a jury trial.

Mr. Jowers said on national television in 1993 that he had hired the gunman who killed Dr. King and that it was not James Earl Ray, who pleaded guilty to the killing and died in a Nashville prison in April.

Mr. Jowers said he had hired the killer as a favor to a now-deceased produce dealer who reportedly had links to organized crime.

Since his television appearance, Mr. Jowers has declined to comment publicly. His lawyer said he would fight the lawsuit.

At the family's urging, the Justice Department has agreed to conduct a new investigation into the murder, and it is expected to focus heavily on Mr. Jowers. The King family has tried for years to get court hearings on their belief that Dr. King's death resulted from a conspiracy, not a lone gunman.

The authorities say they are convinced that Mr. Ray, who recanted his murder confession, was the killer.